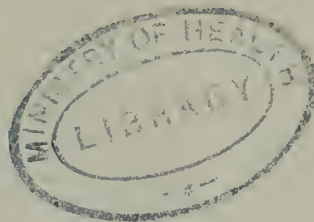


4421(3) HITCHIN
HITCHIN RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL



ANNUAL REPORT
of the
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH
for the year
1948

PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS:

District Medical Officer of Health (and Divisional Medical
Officer for North Herts Area):

VICTOR R. WALKER, M.B., Ch.B., B.Sc., D.P.H. (Since September, 1948).

Divisional Health Office:
12, Brand Street, Hitchin
(Telephone: Hitchin 107)

Senior Sanitary Inspector:
SAMUEL T. GUNNING, Cert. S.I.E.B., F.S.I.A.

Additional Inspector:
ROBERT S. BOLT, Cert. S.I.E.J.B., M.S.I.A.

ncil Offices,
Bancroft, Hitchin,
one: Hitchin 1112-5)

E. POTTER, Clerk to the Council.

To the Chairman and Members of the Hitchin Rural District Council

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to present this Annual Report for 1948 drawn up in accordance with the directions of Ministry of Health Circular 3/49. My predecessor, Dr. N. Macfadyen, was responsible for the work of the first eight months of such year.

The vital statistics for the year all compare favourably with those for England and Wales as a whole, though the local causes of death suggest that the age composition of the population is somewhat older than the national average. Serious infectious disease has been almost completely absent during the year and the very low infant deathrate shows the Hitchin Rural District a very healthy environment into which to be born.

From the operation of the National Health Service Act from 5th July, 1948, there have been several changes in the administration of local public health services, including the setting up by the Herts County Council of a divisional health office in Hitchin to serve the North Herts Division.

In the compilation of this report I would acknowledge the great assistance of your Senior Sanitary Inspector, Mr. S. T. Gunning, who is completely responsible for Sections C - E. I would also record having received from your Council, its chief officers and my predecessor the utmost consideration and help since taking up duties.

I am, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Your obedient servant,
VICTOR R. WALKER.

June, 1949.

District Medical Officer of Health.

SECTION A

LOCAL STATISTICS

| | | |
|--|-----|---------|
| Area (in acres) | ... | 82,559 |
| Population - Registrar-General's Estimate for mid-1948 | ... | 21,680 |
| Number of inhabited houses at 1st April, 1948. | ... | 6,279 |
| Rateable value (1st April, 1948) unreduced | ... | £99,985 |
| Rateable value (1st April, 1948) reduced | ... | £98,005 |
| Sum represented by Penny Rate (actual 1948-49) | ... | £ 399 |

Extract from Vital Statistics for the Year 1948

| | Totals | M. | F. | |
|-------------------------|--------|-----|-----|--------------------------|
| LIVE BIRTHS (Legitimate | 332 | 168 | 164 |) LIVE BIRTHRATE |
| (Illegitimate | 20 | 12 | 8 |) per 1,000 of the |
| (All | 352 | 180 | 172 |) estimated resid- |
| | | | | ent population ... 16. |
| | | | | (England and Wales 17.9) |
| STILLBIRTHS (Legitimate | 9 | 8 | 1 |) STILLBIRTHRATE |
| (Illegitimate | 1 | 1 | - |) per 1,000 total |
| (All | 10 | 9 | 1 |) (live and still) |
| | | | | births ... 27.0 |
| DEATHS | 226 | 116 | 110 | DEATHRATE per |
| | | | | 1,000 of the |
| | | | | estimated resid- |
| | | | | ent population ... 10.4 |
| | | | | (England and Wales 10.8) |

Deathrate of Infants under one year of age:

All infants per 1,000 live births 9.0
(England and Wales 34.0)

Legitimate infants per 1,000 legitimate births ... 9.0

Illegitimate infants per 1,000 illegitimate births 0.0

Actual number of deaths under 1 year:

| | | | | | |
|--------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|---|
| Legitimate | ... | ... | ... | ... | 3 |
| Illegitimate | ... | ... | ... | ... | - |
| Total | | | | | 3 |

Deaths from Puerperal Causes (Puerperal Sepsis ... -
(Other Puerperal causes -

| | | | | |
|--|-----|-----|-----|----|
| Deaths from Cancer (all ages)... | ... | ... | ... | 43 |
| Deaths from Measles (all ages) | ... | ... | ... | - |
| Deaths from Whooping Cough (all ages) | ... | ... | ... | - |
| Deaths from Diarrhoea (under 2 years of age) | ... | ... | ... | 1 |

Comment on local vital statistics

1947. The mid-year population figures show an increase of 530 on

The birthrate of 16.2 falls considerably below that for England and Wales (17.9) and the high local rate for 1947 (18.8).

The deathrate of 10.4 is more favourable than that for England and Wales (10.8) and the local rate for 1947 (11.0).

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| | | | | (England and Wales 17.9) |
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| (Illegitimate | 1 | 1 | - |) per 1,000 total |
| (All | 10 | 9 | 1 |) (live and still) |
| | | | | births ... 27 |
| DEATHS | 226 | 116 | 110 | DEATHRATE per |
| | | | | 1,000 of the |
| | | | | estimated resid- |
| | | | | ent population ... 10 |
| | | | | (England and Wales 10.8) |

Deathrate of Infants under one year of age:

All infants per 1,000 live births (England and Wales 34.0)

Legitimate infants per 1,000 legitimate births ... 9.0

Illegitimate infants per 1,000 illegitimate births 0.0

Actual number of deaths under 1 year:

Legitimate 3

Illegitimate -

Total 3

Deaths from Puerperal Causes (Puerperal Sepsis ... -
 (Other Puerperal causes -

Deaths from Cancer (all ages)... .. 43
 Deaths from Measles (all ages) -
 Deaths from Whooping Cough (all ages) -
 Deaths from Diarrhoea (under 2 years of age) ... 1

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The deathrate of 10.4 is more favourable than that for England and Wales (10.8) and the local rate for 1947 (11.0).

The infant mortality rate of 9 per 1,000 was exceptionally low and the only recorded death from acute infectious disease is one from infantile enteritis.

Principal Causes of Death

Of the 226 deaths 54 were attributed to Heart Disease, 16 to other Circulatory Diseases, 43 to Cancer, 20 to Respiratory Diseases, and 3 to Tuberculosis; 5 were due to Road Traffic Accidents.

SECTION B

General Provision of Health Services

Following the retirement of Dr. Macfadyen in August 1948, there was instituted a combined post of Divisional Medical Officer for the County Health and School Medical Services and District M.O.H. to your Rural District and to the Urban Districts of Hitchin, Letchworth, Baldock, Stevenage and Royston.

For the Hitchin Rural District the Sanitary and Clerical Staff are unchanged.

Section C

Sanitary Circumstances of the Area

Water Supplies

Although there have been no new works of water supply carried out during the year under review, this branch of the work of the Council is one which is receiving constant attention from the point of view of bringing piped water supplies to as many villages as possible. Application for permission to proceed with such works has been made to the Ministry of Health and the following are some of the more important items included in such applications:-

Water Mains to the Villages of Hexton and Langley.
Mains from Therfield to Ashwell to improve the supply to that village and to serve the villages of Bygrave and Newnham en route.

Mains from Offley to Pirton in order that this latter village with Holwell, may take a supply from the source at King's Walden and so allow the closing down of the Borehole at Pirton where constant trouble arises due to silting of the borehole by greensand.

The re-building of the water towers at Codicote and Rabley Heath.

Consequent on no extension of works (previously referred to) there has been little, if any, change in the position as regards the number of dwelling houses supplied, which was fully set out in Parish order in the report submitted last year.

Water Analysis

Table of Results

Two tables of sampling are submitted herewith -

- I. Taken by the Council's Engineer & Surveyor to test the quality of the water delivered from the pumping Stations into the mains.
- II. Taken by the Public Health Department to test the quality of the water delivered to the consumer.

Table I

| Pumping Station | Total | Raw Water | | Treated Water | |
|-----------------|-------|-----------|------|---------------|------|
| | | Pass | Fail | Pass | Fail |
| Ashwell | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | - |
| Codicote | 4 | 4 | - | - | - |
| King's Walden | 7 | 4 | - | 3 | - |
| Peter's Green | 11 | 1 | 10 | - | - |
| Pirton | 12 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 2 |
| Wymondley | 4 | 4 | - | - | - |
| Langley | 3 | - | 3 | - | - |
| Totals | 45 | 17 | 19 | 7 | 2 |

Table II

| 1. <u>Council Undertakings</u> | <u>No. taken</u> | <u>Satis- factory</u> | <u>Unsatis- factory</u> |
|---|------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Offley-Lilley scheme | 61 | 53 | 8 |
| Hitchin-Braughing | 37 | 37 | - |
| Ashwell | 12 | 12 | - |
| Codicote | 9 | 9 | - |
| Wymondley | 1 | 1 | - |
| Pirton | 11 | 11 | - |
| Peter's Green | 15 | 8 | 7 |
| 2. <u>Private Undertakings</u> | | | |
| Knebworth | 12 | 11 | 1 |
| Bygrave | 5 | 3 | 2 |
| Newnham | - | - | - |
| 3. <u>Bulk Supplies</u> | | | |
| Hitchin U.D. (Ickleford) | 2 | 2 | - |
| Stevenage U.D. (Graveley and Todd's Green) | 13 | 13 | - |
| Hertford R.D. (Shephall) | 5 | 5 | - |
| 4. <u>Other Sources</u> | | | |
| Hexton Pump | 1 | - | 1 |
| Langley | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| Radwell | 1 | 1 | - |
| Newnham (Council cottages) | - | - | - |
| Special samples (private supplies) | 11 | 5 | 6 |
| | 199 | 172 | 27 |

Sewers and Sewerage Disposal

Progress in this branch is slow, possibly due to the desire of the Ministry of Health for consideration to be given to a separate scheme for each Village in preference to the original proposals put forward by the Council to amalgamate the drainage system of a number of Parishes and give purification in one treatment plant. The Council's Consulting Engineers have recently issued their reports in respect of separate schemes for the Parishes of Whitwell and Kimpton and the Ministry of Health may be expected to give a decision at an early date.

Other schemes which should be urged forward are Breachwood Green and Weston.

The Commissioners of Crown Lands are anxious that a scheme should be carried out for the Village of Lilley and the Council have asked their Consulting Engineers for a report in this instance.

The scheme for Ickleford awaits the improvement of Hitchin U.D.C. works to which it will be connected.

The drainage of Knebworth may be dealt with in due course by discharge to trunk sewer to be laid by the Stevenage Development Corporation.

There may be a number of villages where schemes of sewerage and sewage disposal cannot be carried out for some considerable time. Your Engineer & Surveyor, however, is not losing sight of an opportunity to provide some up to date facilities in sewage purification where Housing Estates are opened up in such villages; in cases where these small plants can be properly sited without excessive expenditure they will be so designed as to be capable of extension for receiving the sewage from existing properties in the village at some future date.

Public Cleansing Service

Refuse Collection

This service has been entirely re-organised during the year, consequent upon the receipt of two new Dennis Refuse Collection Vehicles of 10 cu.yd. capacity. The re-organised service allows for a weekly collection in the large urbanised area of Knebworth, and a regular fortnightly collection from all other premises throughout the district.

Saturdays are given up to the cleaning of vehicles and urgent work on the tips.

The figures for the year under review are as follows:-

| <u>No. of</u> <u>Loads</u> | <u>Approx. weight of all</u> <u>materials collected</u> | <u>Vehicle mileage</u> |
|-------------------------------|--|------------------------|
| 1671 | 3554 tons (against 3171 tons collected the previous year) | 28148 |

It would appear that this work increases from year to year as the residents of the Rural area become more refuse conscious.

Cesspool Emptying

This service, which has proved of great benefit to the district during the year, has been fully employed and continues to give satisfaction.

An extension of the service has been the collection of night-soil on a limited basis from certain properties in the area - first, those with insufficient ground for the disposal of pail closet contents, secondly, premises occupied by elderly people unable to deal with this matter and, thirdly, special service in cases of illness.

Figures for the cesspool emptying service are as follows:-

| <u>No. of Cesspools Emptied at -</u> | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|--|--------------|
| <u>Houses in private ownership</u> | | <u>Council Houses</u> | | | |
| <u>Free</u> | <u>Chargeable</u> | <u>Free</u> | <u>Chargeable</u> | | <u>Total</u> |
| 287 | 78 | 27 | 82 | | 474 |

Loads removed on Sewage Disposal - 339.

Pails emptied - 716 (service commenced in June)

Salvage

Despite the general tendency amongst householders to have less regard for the salvage of waste paper, our collections for the year under review showed an increase over the previous year, i.e., 64 tons as against 43 tons. An income is shown for the year of £269. 7. 0d., of which £7.14. 9d. was for textiles, which compares favourably with the figure of £226.16.10d. for 1947, which included not only waste paper and textiles, but bones and metal.

Sanitary Inspection of the Area

The following analysis of inspections carried out by your Sanitary Inspectors gives evidence of some aspects of the volume of work undertaken by the Public Health Department -

Total number of Inspections for all purposes 4493

Analysed as follows:-

| | |
|--|------|
| For defects under the Housing Acts | 2491 |
| (Inc. Rural Housing Survey 1663) | |
| For defects under the Factory Acts | 28 |
| For the prevention of Infectious Disease | 87 |
| As to the sanitary condition of Schools and Public Halls | 19 |
| Inspections under the Milk & Dairies Order | 154 |
| Inspections of slaughter-houses, butchers' shops etc. | 50 |
| For the prevention of Nuisances | 242 |
| Inspections of drainage, conversions etc. | 119 |
| Inspections of water supplies and sampling | 36 |
| Supervision of Refuse Collection and Salvage Disposal | 789 |
| Inspections re Rats and Mice destruction | 56 |
| Inspections under Shops Act 1934 | 32 |
| Miscellaneous Inspections , | 240 |
| Inspections of Moveable Dwellings | 36 |
| Food & Drugs Act | 114 |

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Section D

Housing

Progress with the erection of new houses has been somewhat disappointing; there have been difficulties in completing contracts at Ashwell and Thirfield, and in addition, the choice of sites in certain areas such as Offley and Wymondley has been the subject of many protracted meetings. It is however, necessary that in such areas every aspect of the Village Plan should be considered, for here we are planning for a good many years ahead. Sewage disposal schemes are involved in both parishes but the Surveyor informs me he is satisfied that the progress he is making is such that a final scheme should be very pleasing for the villages concerned.

The new houses erected in the District during the year ended December 31st 1948 were as follows:-

By the Local Authority
Permanent, Traditional.... 57
Adaptations and Conversions* 26
(inc. Nissen Huts)

By Private Enterprise 5

This, I submit, is a further record of progress which, though fully appreciated, is not sufficient to keep pace with the increasing number of applications from those living and working in the district who are requiring accommodation.

At the close of the year we had 1454 applications, which figure, following the Ministry of Health review of Housing Applications, was reduced to 983. This figure is again increasing however, and at March 31st 1949 was 1019.

Rural Housing Survey

The Rural Housing Survey, to which reference was made in the report for 1947, was completed during the year, and the information obtained has already proved of great value, not only in the Public Health Department but in other departments of the Council, by reason of the volume of facts which can be extracted therefrom.

At the same time, it does reveal an urgent need for the introduction of a scheme which will make available both material and manpower to save by thorough re-conditioning and improvement many of the houses in this district which have fallen into a sad state of repair during the war period and since, when ordinary property maintenance was practically at a standstill.

A complete summary of the Survey shows the following position -

| <u>No. of houses</u> <u>inspected</u> | <u>Classification</u> | | | |
|--|-----------------------|------|------|-----|
| | 1. | 2. | 3. | 4. |
| 5229 | 1709 | 1919 | 1250 | 351 |

Sanitary Improvements

With the easing of licensing restrictions, many owners of property have taken the opportunity to submit schemes for sanitary improvements to existing dwellings. In many other cases schemes are being withheld awaiting possible legislation which foreshadows financial assistance for complete schemes of improvement. Altogether, some 110 sanitary improvements have been carried out.

There were no Abatement Notices outstanding at December 31st.

Section EInspection and Supervision of Food

a. Milk. The number of Registered Producers and/or Producer-Retailers on your Register at December 31st was 154. Of these, 37 are licensed for the production of Tuberculin Tested milk, and 18 for the sale of milk produced under the designation "Accredited", the remaining 99 being undesignated producers.

In addition, there are 30 registered Retailers, 21 of whom retail milk produced outside the Hitchin Rural District.

The standard of milk produced is reflected in the results obtained by analysis, which are summarised as follows:-

Summary of Milk Samples taken during 1948 -

| Sampling Authority | Designated & School milks | | Non-designated milks | | Tubercule Bacilli | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------|------------------------|---------------|-------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| | <u>Satis- fied</u> | <u>Failed</u> | <u>Satis- fied</u> | <u>Failed</u> | <u>Pos.</u> | <u>Neg.</u> | <u>No Result</u> |
| Herts. County Council | 252 | 78 | 27 | 3 | - | - | - |
| Other Authorities | 46 | 33 | 37 | 27 | - | 58 | - |
| Hitchin Rural Dist. Council | - | - | 2 | - | - | - | - |
| TOTAL | 298 | 111 | 66 | 30 | - | 58 | - |

Total No. of samples - 505

No. of Brucella Abortis
Cultures produced - 10

Special enquiries have been carried out at premises where reports either from our own sampling or from adjoining Urban Districts show unsatisfactory results.

b. Meat and Other Foods. There are no slaughter-houses operating within the Hitchin Rural District but all butchers' shops and other food shops received careful attention, although I would record that it has not been possible to give the amount of time which is due to this important aspect of Public Health administration.

Laboratory and chemical examination of milk and other foodstuffs, and sampling under the Food & Drugs Act, are carried out by the County Council.

In this connection, 175 samples of milk were taken for biological tests with the following results:-

| <u>Negative</u> | <u>Positive</u> | <u>Inconclusive</u> |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| 165 | 3 | 7 |

Information relating to the three positive cases was referred to the Divisional Veterinary Inspector of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

The amount of food condemned during the year is as follows:-

| | <u>Cwts.</u> | <u>Qrs.</u> | <u>Lbs.</u> | <u>Ozs.</u> |
|-----------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Meat | - | - | - | - |
| Fruit | - | - | 24 | - |
| Other Foods ... | 3 | 3 | 27 | 12 |
| Total | 4 | - | 23 | 12 |

c. Food Poisoning Outbreaks. There is no record of any cases of food poisoning in the district during the year under review.

d. Factories Act 1937. The table which follows is taken from the report submitted to the Ministry of Labour and National Service on Form 572, in accordance with the requirements of the Ministry's Circular.

Section F.Prevalence of and control over infectious and
other diseases

During the year notifications of infectious disease (after correction of diagnosis) were: measles 22, whooping cough 59, chickenpox 54, scarlet fever 21, pneumonia 4, jaundice 3 and puerperal pyrexia 1. No cases of poliomyelitis, enteric disease or food poisoning were notified.

Notifications of minor infectious disease (chickenpox, measles and whooping cough) is very far from complete but, combined with information from schools and the contiguous urban districts, are sufficient to give a fair picture of the epidemic state at any point in time. During the fourth quarter of the year there was a heavy prevalence of measles in the eastern section of the district, particularly severe in the Weston area.

Scarlet Fever. Cases were few and mainly sporadic, apart from a mild epidemic prevalence in the Bygrave area in the third quarter. Such disease has become so mild that hospitalisation is becoming much less indicated.

Diphtheria. No case was notified during the year and it is to be hoped that, with the enormous decline in incidence all over the country, there will be no falling off in the acceptance by parents of immunisation, which must be the main causal factor in the spectacular reduction in diphtheria prevalence over the last eight years.

Diphtheria Prophylaxis. In addition to its continued provision by the Herts County welfare and school health services such is now freely obtainable under the National Health Service from private practitioners. Figures for children immunised in each district during the year are not immediately available but there has been no slackening off either in publicity given to such measure or in the degree of its acceptance by parents.

Scabies and infestation. At the end of the year your district council came to a financial agreement for the use, when required, of the cleansing station belonging to the Letchworth Urban District Council at the sanitary department of that authority.

Tuberculosis RegisterNew Cases and Deaths for the Year

| Age Periods | <u>New Cases</u> | | | | <u>Deaths</u> | | | |
|----------------|------------------|----|-----------------|----|---------------|----|-----------------|----|
| | Respiratory | | Non-Respiratory | | Respiratory | | Non-Respiratory | |
| | M. | F. | M. | F. | M. | F. | M. | F. |
| 0 - 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 1 - 5 | - | - | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | - |
| 5 - 15 | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 15 - 25 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | - |
| 25 - 35 | 3 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | - | - |
| 35 - 45 | 2 | 1 | - | - | - | 1 | - | - |
| 45 - 55 | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | - |
| 55 - 65 | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | - |
| and over | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Totals | 9 | 4 | 4 | 3 | - | 1 | - | - |

Note. After completion of outward and inward transfers, the Registrar-General gives the deaths from tuberculosis for the district as Respiratory 2, Other forms 1.

The above figures show 20 new cases of Tuberculosis reported during the year under review, as against 17 for the year 1947. Three patients suffering from Tuberculosis were recorded as cured.

VICTOR R. WALKER.
District Medical Officer
of Health

June, 1949